



City of Seattle
Mike McGinn, Mayor

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

January 27, 2009

Contact: Mark Matassa (206) 233-2655 or mark.matassa@seattle.gov

Mayor reinforces City support for green jobs

SEATTLE – Seattle Mayor Mike McGinn today recognized the innovative work of a city-supported weatherization training program designed to prepare local workers for employment in the energy efficiency sector. The 3 ½ week program, which teaches students weatherization techniques that increase energy efficiency in residential homes, will graduate its inaugural class of 18 low-income, low-skilled workers this Friday.

“Workforce training that emphasizes green jobs is a great example of Seattle’s commitment to environmental and social justice,” McGinn said. “Weatherization reduces Seattle’s carbon footprint, and this training provides low-skilled workers with a concrete career pathway into a good-paying job.”

Joining McGinn at the recognition event were Steve Johnson, Acting Director of Seattle’s Office of Economic Development; Jill Wakefield, Chancellor of Seattle Community Colleges; and Gary Oertli, President of South Seattle Community College.

“South Seattle Community College is proud to present this program in collaboration with the City of Seattle and Seattle Jobs Initiative,” Oertli said. “Our one-of-a-kind curriculum ensures that these students will acquire hands-on, industry-driven job skills that will greatly benefit them as they enter the energy efficiency field.”

To create the weatherization program, Seattle’s Office of Economic Development and its partners worked closely with local employers to develop the specially-tailored curriculum, build a state-of-the-art lab, and pre-screen program applicants for work readiness. The program’s integrated approach is designed to ensure that the skills taught in the weatherization lab are immediately relevant to local industry demand.

The program’s inaugural graduating class is diverse, including five U.S. veterans, three women, and representatives of nine different countries. The program supports individuals that are lower-income, have been facing unemployment, and need training to acquire

additional skills to be competitive in a tight labor market. Additionally, the program provides workers with sustained exposure to important local trades.

“I’ll never look at a house the same way again,” said Joshua Farris, a U.S. veteran and soon-to-be graduate of the program. “It’s not just a house anymore—it’s a machine. You have to really step back and look at how each piece works together. I think of myself as a ‘whole house’ mechanic now.”

Seattle Jobs Initiative will provide post-graduation support services for the students as they pursue jobs in the growing energy efficiency sector.

“We need to be doing a lot more of this type of work in Seattle,” McGinn said. “I’m committed to making sure that this type of training continues to support workers and grow new jobs.”

###